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BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH - ANALYSIS: January 3, 1980

1. IRAN: PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE AND POLITICAL POWER

The Islamic Republican Party (IRP) -- controlled by Iran's hardline clerical elite -- has nominated an unknown professor, Jalaaladdin Farsi, as its presidential candidate. That almost guarantees his election. Through Farsi, the clerics can be expected to maintain their control of Iran's political life.

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According to reports, more than 100 people had expressed an interest in being a presidential candidate in the January 25 election. They included such prominent figures as former Prime Minister Bazargan, Foreign Minister Gotbzadeh, Finance Minister Bani-Sadr and Admiral Madani. Several factors may have influenced the IRP selection of Farsi:

- Clerical unity is maintained since, if two important figures had run, a serious split might have developed within the top leadership.
- The opportunities for ambitious secular personalities are reduced.

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Farsi has Palestinian connections. Press reports indicate that during the Shah's rule Farsi spent at least eight years in Lebanon.

[REDACTED] It is likely that this is the IRP candidate.

Under Iran's new constitution, the president could be the most important popularly elected official. His duties include:

- approving, with the assent of the National Assembly, all treaties and agreements with foreign governments;
- nominating the Prime Minister; and
- approving the Council of Ministers (nominated by the Prime Minister), which will run the government. The Council may meet with the President at his discretion; in that case he supersedes the Prime Minister as head of the Council.

In the hands of a powerful elected figure, these duties could be the basis of national leadership. Given Farsi's relative insignificance, and the powers that Khomeini and his associates apparently plan to maintain, the presidency will probably not amount to much in the foreseeable future.

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DOS review(s) completed.

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